



**Testimony of Deborah McElroy
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before the

**House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Subcommittee on Aviation
Aviation and the Environment: Noise
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Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri, members and staff of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, thank you for allowing Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA) the opportunity to participate in this important hearing on “*Aviation and the Environment: Noise.*” My name is Deborah McElroy and I serve as Executive Vice President, Policy and External Affairs for ACI-NA. ACI-NA member airports enplane more than 95 percent of the domestic and virtually all the international airline passenger and cargo traffic in North America. Nearly 400 aviation related business are also members of ACI-NA.

Mr. Chairman, as you well know, continued robust growth for the aviation industry is predicted by both government and industry analysts, increasing attention on the environmental impacts of aircraft and airport operations. Airport directors well understand this concern and for decades have taken proactive steps to better understand and mitigate those impacts, especially aviation noise in their local communities. Additionally, since much the major source of aviation-related noise – aircraft –is outside an individual airport’s control, ACI-NA and its members are working collaboratively to influence international, federal and state/local organizations, manufacturers and airlines to continue to address this important issue. We have been disappointed that International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) negotiations have not yielded more stringent noise standards for new production aircraft.

The good news is, over the last three decades, aircraft engines have become quieter, reducing the overall exposure of aircraft noise. Yet given these technological advances

with newer aircraft, there are many older noisier aircraft in the US airline fleet and aircraft noise continues to be an issue in airport communities. Many airport directors will tell you that despite their best efforts, the push for continued residential development near airports keeps noise at the forefront of their agenda.

In the United States, while the federal government controls aircraft certification standards and flight routing, airport operators have worked to reduce the noise impacting nearby communities and encouraged the FAA to institute programs tailored to the unique concerns at each airport. Common noise-related actions include FAA-directed noise abatement runway use and flight tracks, programs for ground run-ups, noise management programs (that monitor runway use and flight tracks, as well as compile noise complaints), airport-sponsored pilot awareness/fly quiet programs, sound insulation programs, and local land use actions.

Common Noise-Related Actions/What Airports are Specifically Doing

Part 150 Noise Compatibility Program - Many airports are mitigating noise through the Title 14 CFR part 150 (Part 150) Airport Noise Compatibility Program. Implemented as a FAA final rule in 1985, this program promotes comprehensive airport noise planning and mitigation. As part of this voluntary program, FAA has approved \$4.5 billion in AIP grants and \$3 billion in PFC funding for noise mitigation funds to assist local communities. Such assistance includes soundproofing residences, schools, hospitals, conducting land use and zoning studies, designing noise abatement procedures and other strategies.

Airport operators decide to undertake a Part 150 study when doing so promises to reduce, or further reduce, aircraft noise exposures to jurisdictions within the airport's environment. There are two main products of a Part 150 study: 1) Revised Noise Exposure Maps (NEM) and 2) Noise Compatibility Plan (NCP).

Airport Operators prepare NEMs using the integrated noise model (INM), a computer application designed to: quantify current noise exposure; look at abatement alternatives; and forecast future noise exposures. For the purpose of the study, they create maps that represent baseline, or most recent conditions, and also maps that show forecasted conditions at least five years into the future.. The future-anticipated contours help with long-term planning efforts.

Noise Compatibility Plans are menus of actions that the FAA and the communities that are near the airport can take to reduce aircraft noise exposure. NCPs can consist of preferential flight tracks, preferential runway use, limiting the time and location of maintenance run-ups, the acoustical treatment or acquisition of edifices, special zoning, enhanced building codes and disclosure requirements.

Under federal law, FAA can only provide funds from its Part 150 program to assist a community with noise mitigation if the airport is a participant in the Part 150 program. According to the "2008-2012 FAA Flight Plan", approximately 20,000 individuals in

noise impacted areas will receive benefits from noise compatibility projects funded under AIP in fiscal 2007.

Citizen Advisory Groups- The greatest issue of concern for airports is working with neighbors to reduce the impact of aircraft noise operations. Many airports across the country, including Chicago, San Francisco and San Jose work with local citizens, governments and elected officials to develop procedures and programs to reduce noise.

In Chicago, the O'Hare Compatibility Commission (ONCC) is the organization dedicated to reducing aircraft noise in the communities around O'Hare International Airport. It was established in 1996, following an invitation from Chicago Mayor Daly to suburban mayors to begin constructive dialogues on aircraft noise issues with the goal of reducing noise. Since its founding, the ONCC's membership has grown tremendously and now includes 24 municipalities, Cook County and 15 school districts that represent 40 communities around O'Hare. These members are represented by their mayors and school superintendents at approximately 30 public meetings that the ONCC and its committee hold annually.

The ONCC operates through three standing committees: Technical, Residential Sound Insulation, and School Sound Insulation. Total spending on these programs since they began is approximately \$440 million dollars.

Like Chicago, the San Francisco International Airport's (SFO) "Community Roundtable" is one of the longest established community based airport noise mitigation organizations in the country, and is an example of neighborhood groups working cooperatively with the airport and the aviation industry to reduce noise impacts. Established in 1981, the Roundtable's 45 representatives and alternates are elected officials representing the City and County of San Francisco and San Mateo County, as well as advisory members, airline chief pilots, and FAA staff. SFO airport staff support and attend monthly Roundtable meetings, at which public discussion focuses on airport noise abatement activities.

SFO's Fly Quiet Program is an Airport Community Roundtable initiative implemented by the Airports Noise Abatement Office. The purpose of this program is to encourage individual airlines to operate as quietly as possible at SFO. The program promotes a participatory approach in complying with noise abatement procedures and objectives by grading an airline's performance. As part of the program, SFO staff generate a Fly Quiet Report, which provides airline scores on the following elements: Fleet noise quality, exceedances of allowable noise levels, nighttime preferential runway use, shoreline departure frequency, gap departure quality, and foster city arrival rating. The overall scores are made available to the public via newsletters, publications, and public meetings. Fly Quiet encourages implementation of new noise abatement initiatives by recognizing and publicizing active participations.

As part of the City of San Jose's corporate priority of Neighborhood-Focused Service Delivery, the Mineta San Jose International Airport established the Acoustical Treatment Program. The program identifies residences and other sensitive living areas within the 65 and 60 decibels California Noise Exposure Level contours where interior noise exposure is at or above 45 decibels. At these locations, sound insulation improvements are installed at no cost to the property owner. Aspects of the program include allowing the property owners to review the improvement specifications and a field office and showroom. The program, which should be completed by 2008, has committed over \$90 million for treating structures within the 65 decibels contour and will fund \$100 million for other structures that have historical significance.

Airports Appreciate Measures in H.R. 2881

ACI-NA applauds the Aviation Subcommittee, as well as the full Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, for its hard work on H.R. 2881, the "Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2007". We especially commend you for your efforts to mitigate aircraft noise by phasing-out Stage 1 or 2 aircraft less than 75,000 pounds within the 48 contiguous states after December 31, 2012. Also for the establishment of the "Environmental Mitigation Pilot Program" permitting FAA to fund six projects at public-use airports to take promising environmental research concepts for mitigation related to aircraft noise, emissions or water quality.

Continued research is also critical. The aviation industry will benefit from the Committee's leadership in establishing the "CLEEN Engine and Airframe Technology

Partnership” included in H.R. 2881 for FAA to enter into a ten-year cooperative agreement for the development, maturing and certification of continuous lower energy, emissions and noise engine and airframe technology. Additionally, we commend your efforts to increase funding for the Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP), which provides research to further mitigate the impacts of noise to airport communities.

Additional Action Congress Could Take to Address Noise

However, we believe it is important for Congress to consider additional actions to assist airports in mitigating the impact of aviation noise on their communities:

- **Expand AIP Eligibility for Part 150 Studies:** Development of new flight procedures can provide benefits both to airport/airspace capacity and noise impact reduction. For instance, the implementation of a Continuous Descent Approach has been shown to save fuel and reduce noise below the flight path. Louisville Regional Airport Authority was host to the first-ever test of the continuous descent approach (CDA). The CDA test results offered the potential for a reduction in aircraft noise for residents living 10 to 30 miles off the end of the airport’s runways.

Implementation of such procedures, where appropriate, should be facilitated. Currently development of flight procedures to abate noise is authorized for inclusion in a Part 150 program, and would thus be AIP eligible. However, the NEPA analysis of such flight restrictions is not currently AIP-eligible. ACI-NA believes it would be helpful to amend Sec. 47504(c)(1) to expressly provide that

AIP funds could be expended for NEPA processing of such procedures. This is important, because FAA now finds that its staff is often unable to take on additional work relating to NEPA review of flight track procedures, and it does not have the resources within its Operations and Maintenance budget to pay consultants to do so. This provision would allow AIP funding so that an airport that believes that implementation of the procedures would provide significant noise benefits would not have to wait an inordinate amount of time before such procedures could be implemented, thus delaying noise relief for surrounding communities.

- **Require FAA to Expeditiously Review Part 161 Proposals:** Airports must follow 14 CFR Part 161 (Part 161) guidelines, which were issued in 1990 to implement the Aircraft Noise and Capacity Act (ANCA). Part 161 requires analysis and public notice of noise or flight restrictions and FAA approval before airports can adopt such measures. Given increasing congestion and noise complaints, many airports are already proactively participating in Part 161 studies. However, the FAA remains slow in approving Part 161 studies and to date, only one airport (Naples) has been approved to implement airport-specific measures. (However, the restrictions have not yet been put into place.) ACI-NA agrees with FAA that a balanced approach to addressing noise issue is critical, but airports believe that there are instances where operating restrictions are the only available measure to address noise concerns. In the face of growing congestion, ACI-NA believes Part 161 should be re-examined to provide

additional options for airports to solve noise problems with reasonable, non-discriminatory operating restrictions.

Summary

In closing, ACI-NA and its member airports thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this important matter. We look forward to working with you as addressing this important issue is critical for the future of the aviation industry.